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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Iran Hamas Chad
PARIS - Friday, April 14, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Iran
Hamas
Chad

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Ambassador Stapleton is interviewed on page two of regional La Voix du Nord on Franco-American relations. "There have always been diverging opinions between France and the U.S. . but they have never kept us from being allies. We cooperate very closely on important issues such as Iran, Afghanistan, the fight against terrorism and military cooperation."

Two lead stories share top billing in today's headlines, the political aftermath of the recent CPE battle and its effect on France's leading political figures, and the worsening situation in Chad. La Croix headlines "France Caught Up in the Crisis in Chad" and explains that more than a thousand French soldiers and 1600 ex-pats live in Chad. The extensive report explains the inter-connection between Chad's oil reserves and Sudan's power play. In an analysis, La Croix explains: "although Paris is embarrassed by the situation and by Chad's President, 'a dictator without scruples,' it is nevertheless giving its support to President Idriss." For Le Figaro, "Chad is weakened by the conflicts in nearby Darfur" and adds that Sudan is "aided in the north by Libya which considers Chad to be its 'playground.'" For Liberation "France could well be caught in a trap" and an analysis by Jean-Dominique Merchet suggests "this is a harsh blow for France's Africa policy." (See Part C)

Iran's nuclear ambitions and El-Baradei's visit to Teheran are reported. Le Figaro comments on a "delicate mission" because of Iran's "fait accompli." Le Monde quotes Secretary Rice's demand for "strong measures to be taken" by the UNSC and also quotes FM Douste Blazy who has "firmly" invited Iran to "suspend its dangerous activities." Liberation carries an op-ed by a researcher from IRIS, Institute for Strategic Relations, Frederic Tellier, who comments on "Iran's serene nuclear strategy because of the West's reticence to trigger a crisis with Iran." (See Part C)

Le Figaro carries an op-ed on Hamas and its new political role, and asks: "is this a catastrophe or an opportunity to be seized?" (See Part C)

Le Figaro reports that Moussaoui "has accused his lawyers of not having his best interests at heart. and of not having found him a Muslim lawyer." Moussaoui's "venom" towards the U.S. is noted and the article comments: "His accusations may well in the end feed the defense's agenda: proving the mental instability of the accused." La Croix reports extensively on the "horror of 9/11" as illustrated by testimonies and sound recordings played at the trial.

La Tribune reports on the "groan" caused by the delay of "passports for the U.S." "Electronic passports, mandatory for going to the U.S. for travelers who do not have a machine readable passport, are finally ready. As of yesterday, the National Printing Office began to produce them. They will be available as of April 19 in Paris and between May 2 and June 25 for the other departments." Ticket sales for the U.S., however, have declined already by 40%, according to a tour operator, Vacances Transat. The Canadian market, in contrast, is booming with a 10% increase in French travel. Le Parisien shows a picture of the "new electronic passport."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Iran

"Tehran's Serene Nuclear Strategy"
Frederic Tellier of the Institute for Strategic Relations in left-of-center Liberation (04/14): "Has Tehran already won its nuclear bet? Faced with the West's show of determination,

Tehran is advertising complete serenity. The only true threat which Tehran has ever taken seriously, America's military threat, is fast eroding. The Iranians are well aware that the West's instinctive reticence to trigger a crisis with Iran is gaining in the U.S. This unprecedented situation has opened a narrow window of opportunity which Tehran has every intention of taking advantage of it."

Hamas

"Hamas in Power: A Catastrophe or an Opportunity to Be Seized?"

Pierre Rousselin in right-of-center Le Figaro (04/14): "The results of the elections in Palestine could either be a catastrophe for peace or an opportunity. At first glance nothing good can be expected from a movement, which calls for the destruction of Israel and has now found legitimacy through the ballots. Optimists will say that at least things are finally clear. But the truth is that no one knows what conclusions should be drawn from these elections. If the outcome is indeed a catastrophe, then we must put an end to this situation. The hawks in Israel and in the U.S. are in favor of this option. If this is an opportunity, we must define the rules of the game, which the Islamists must adhere to. The position adopted by the U.S. and Europe is not about to make Hamas change. For those who are financing the region, the question is not whether to open or close the flow of money, but to re-orient their financing. As for security issues, we must demand of Hamas that it respect the cease-fire. Regarding the mutual recognition of the two states, this must be an absolute pre-requisite. But Hamas will not agree to anything unless negotiations are part of the agenda. Rather than sticking to a 'roadmap' which has never been implemented, the international community should take into account Israel's unilateralism and include it in planned negotiations with the Palestinians. The international community's priority task is to help Hamas evolve. This is not just for the sake of peace in Palestine. Because of Hamas's role in the Muslim world, it is for the sake of Islam in the world. If the problem which has come about because of an election is not dealt with seriously, a policy of the worse could plunge the region into chaos."

Chad

"Ambivalence in Africa"

Patrick Sabatier in left-of-center Liberation (04/14): "As long as France continues with its traditional Africa policy, it will continue to be confronted with the same dilemma: to intervene directly, and be accused of neo-colonialism, or to disengage completely, and abandon whole populations to be slaughtered. But in not choosing, France puts its soldiers in a dire and uncomfortable position of arbiter and therefore of being used as a punching ball. The crisis in Chad is also the extension of the cancer that is ravaging the Darfur region in neighboring Sudan. We can ignore the crisis in Chad, at the risk of letting it become another huge Darfur, or another Somalia. Our Legislators should at least discuss the problem."

STAPLETON